

Is Sleep Really Important?
Absolutely YES! – Here's Why...

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Eating right, exercising adequately and sleeping enough are important for one's health, with sleeping probably being the most ignored. Not only is sleep a key factor for a healthy lifestyle, but sleep is an essential time of rest and rejuvenation for body and mind. This connection can be found in no better place than our immune system which becomes weak without adequate sleep resulting in our body becoming more vulnerable to infection and disease.

Many people share a common viewpoint that because there is so much to do, sleep seems like a waste of time. The required amount of sleep varies with each person, but nobody can live without it. Teens typically need from 9-9½ hours per night while adults usually require 7½-8 hours.

There are only so many hours in the day and more things to do than time will allow. Sleep time ends up suffering when teens and many adults make time management choices. However, most people think of sleep in terms of quantity, while quality of sleep is often overlooked. One study from ScienceDaily found that, in fact, academic performance improved with greater high-quality sleep.

The enormous and impressive benefits of sleep keep on giving. Another study suggests that getting only 30 minutes more sleep can make the difference in grades from Cs, Ds and Fs to As and Bs. Try an experiment for a month to personally confirm or dispute this theory – that GPA just might increase. Busy athletes should also take note since growth hormones, which are released during sleep, are vital to growing children for restorative processes such as muscle repair.

Here are some additional explanations for why grades improve – ample sleep actually helps to organize and consolidate memories, emotions and stress, solidify learning, improve concentration and regulate mood. Conversely, one can become irritable and cranky from lack of sleep, affecting one's emotions, social interactions, and decision making. Consistent sleep deprivation can cause all sorts of problems, e.g., daytime drowsiness, trouble concentrating, lower grades, irritability, increased risk of falls and worse. Sleep deprivation also affects motor skills, enough to be similar to driving while drunk if seriously sleep deprived. With so many new drivers, the issue of driver fatigue should not be overlooked. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, fatigued drivers cause over 100,000 accidents and 1,500 deaths each year. Don't drive fatigued!

Lack of sleep makes concentrating more difficult for anyone and especially for students in school during early morning classes. While most teens would prefer a later school start time, this is a costly and therefore unlikely option at least for the present students. Here are a few tips to use in the meantime to improve one's quality of sleep:

- Create a better sleep environment with ample darkness, ventilation, space, pillows and bedding while being free of excessive noise;
- Develop a relaxing bedtime routine such as reading a light book or listening to soft music ;
- Improve your diet and get regular exercise; and
- Go to bed at the same time every night as much as possible.

Click here <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/sleep/sheep> to take the BBC's fun test to determine your reaction time related to sleep.

Click here http://www.helpguide.org/life/sleep_tips.htm to take the "How much sleep do I need" test, learn more tips for how to sleep better as well as read more on this topic.